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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 001479

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: CLINTON-KOUCHNER LETTER AND UNOMIG DEMARCHE
DELIVERED

REF: A. MOSCOW 57319
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 57309

Classified By: Pol M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On June 4, Ambassador delivered Ref B talking points on UNOMIG to DFM Karasin, while post delivered ref A and B demarche and letter to MFA Fourth CIS Director Kelin the same day, jointly with French Embassy DCM Philippe Lefort. Karasin said Russia would engage and negotiate on the UNOMIG renewal negotiations, with Permrep Churkin presenting edits to Germany's draft resolution and explaining Moscow's redlines. Kelin described the contents of the Clinton-Kouchner letter as "overtaken by events," given DFM Karasin's June 4 presentation to the OSCE reiterating Russia's position that all sides must accept the "new parameters" and accommodate South Ossetian concerns about OSCE monitors in order to preserve the "useful" presence of international observers. Kelin also raised the Joint Incident Prevention Mechanism and outlined Russian assistance to South Ossetia, reiterating calls to reopen the Verkhny/Zemo Lars border crossing. End Summary.

UNOMIG

[1](#)2. (C) In a June 4 conversation with DFM Karasin, who had departed Moscow for an OSCE presentation in Vienna, Ambassador delivered Ref B demarche. Karasin denied that Russian UN Permrep Churkin was not instructed to engage on the mandate, charging that was "out of date or a misunderstanding." Karasin stressed that Churkin was "fully empowered" to engage and negotiate on all substantive points. The German draft was not ideal in its current form, Karasin said, containing too many "anachronisms," with the reference to "Georgia" in the title both demeaning and unacceptable to the Abkhaz. While the German draft contained "some" elements of the UNSYG report, Karasin complained that it had drawn "too selectively" from the report's "menu of recommendations." He added that he had explained the Russian view in greater detail to UN envoy Verbeke during their May 29 meeting, where he had reiterated Russia's willingness to extend the UNOMIG mandate, but only if it didn't contain passages that had "outlived their time."

[1](#)3. (C) Separately, we delivered the joint Secretary-Kouchner letter on Georgia (ref A) and reiterated our concerns over Russia's negotiating stance on UNOMIG to MFA Fourth CIS Director Kelin on June 4, jointly with French Embassy DCM Philippe Lefort. On the UNOMIG negotiations, Kelin said Churkin would explain his "confrontational" position to the Group of Friends. Kelin said there were numerous elements in

the "political" section of the German draft that were unacceptable, for example the reference to Georgia's territorial integrity, the characterization of Russia as a party to the conflict, the name of the UN mission, and the term "conflict zone." The "substantive" paragraphs also "needed a lot of work," Kelin said, in order to maximize correspondence with the UNSYG report. (Note: Kelin did not elaborate, although we had pointed out that the German draft almost verbatim repeated the recommendations from the UNSYG's report. End note) Still, the German draft was "close to our view," Kelin said.

14. (C) Kelin continued to say that Churkin would present Russia's redlines on the German draft, plus explain the rationale for the proposed GOR edits he would provide. For example, Kelin said the Russians would ask to raise the number of APCs in the restricted zone from 10 to 15, to correspond with an "existing Russia-Georgia agreement." He asserted Russia would be "maximally cooperative" in order to find a consensus agreement.

Clinton-Kouchner letter

15. (C) Kelin described the contents of the Clinton-Kouchner letter as "overtaken by events," as DFM Karasin had just stated Russia's "simple" position to the OSCE in Vienna. It consisted of two variants, Kelin said: if all international observers were to leave Georgia, there would soon be a new war, which would be a bad outcome. The second variant was

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that all sides accepted the "new parameters," which would allow OSCE and UN observers to stay, in turn bringing stability and security.

16. (C) Kelin reiterated Russia's position that it wanted to continue both the OSCE and UN monitoring missions, but reasserted that the "useful" presence of international observers brought with it the need to accommodate Tskhinvali's concerns about observers. Kelin called on the West to avoid setting ultimatums on consensus (including by pointing to the deadline for mandate renewals) in order to avoid addressing Tskhinvali's concerns.

17. (C) While reiterating the need to obtain South Ossetian agreement, Kelin said that negotiations on the OSCE mandate could be a "new start," and that there was "room to negotiate." Although Russia supported an international presence in South Ossetia under a new formula, the OSCE's "poor track record" in South Ossetia needed to be considered.

JIPRM

18. (C) Kelin also raised the Joint Incident Prevention and Reporting Mechanism (JIPRM), calling for flexibility on the designation of chairs. Russia could not agree to EUMM chief Hans-Joerg Haber's proposal of designating the EU and OSCE as co-chairs, as that was "unacceptable" to the South Ossetians. Kelin urged that the question "not be politicized," saying it was important that the JIPRM met and discussed practical questions.

Assistance to South Ossetia

19. (C) Kelin described Russia's cooperation with South Ossetia as unchanged since the May 31 "elections," and still governed by the Big Treaty signed September 17, 2008. While the question of aid disbursement remained the biggest problem, cooperation on other issues such as debt repayment assistance, delivery of medical supplies, construction of a

gas pipeline from Russia, and economic development continued.

¶10. (C) Kelin noted that the Russian troops in South Ossetia would pull back to their South Ossetian bases after June 15, and would maintain only a "minimal presence" in the region that would be lower than the 3,700 strength agreed upon earlier. Troops were already being replaced by FSB border guards. Kelin added that the border guards were also assisting these humanitarian efforts, for example by delivering schoolbooks and medicines.

¶11. (C) Kelin also reiterated Russia's interest in reopening the Verkhny/Zemo Lars border crossing post between Georgia proper and Russia, but said Georgia's reply was still outstanding. (Note: In a June 4 lunch, Georgian charge Shugarov told us that Tbilisi had insisted that any discussion on border openings be mediated by the Swiss, but acknowledged that the initiative could be a back door means for eroding the trade embargo and increasing contacts between the two countries. Russia continued to resist Swiss mediation, he maintained, as part of a consistent policy of avoiding "internationalization" of the dispute." End Note.)
BEYRLE